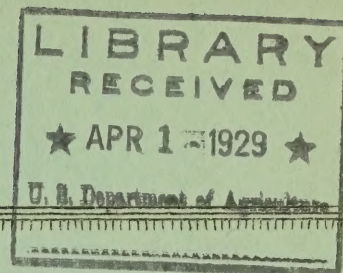


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# Effective Circular Letters

♦♦ *how to prepare them* ♦♦

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Agriculturist, Central States  
Office of Cooperative Extension Work

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Extension Service.....C. W. Warburton, Director  
Office of Cooperative Extension Work..C. B. Smith, Chief  
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# Effective Circular Letters

## *how to prepare them*

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Office of Cooperative Extension Work

### The Well-Planned Letter is Effective



EARLY all projects and subject matter used in extension work can be presented effectively through well-planned circular letters, just as practically everything that people will buy can be sold by mail. Circular letters and press articles or news items can be used to supplement or to reenforce each of the other extension means either as an announcement to get attendance and material to stimulate interest in the subject or as a method of follow-up to emphasize the material presented through other means. Circular letters are especially helpful to maintain the interest and cooperation of 4-H club members, demonstrators, and other cooperators who need to get seasonal or monthly suggestions regarding the next step in procedure.

Next to the personal contacts through meetings, office calls, and farm visits, carefully planned circular letters are among the most easy, quick, effective, and inexpensive means used by county extension agents for reaching special groups of farm people. Though it is possible to get a message before more people at less expense through news articles, the circular letter has the advantage of making a more direct personal appeal. The direct personal appeal to those people who are most interested is most likely to get results. Every effective extension circular letter influences either the attitude or action of the recipient. It may create good will toward extension work and the extension agents.

The State leader of home demonstration work in Oregon made the following statement in her annual report regarding the use of circular letters: "The Josephine County home demonstration agent has used circular letters as a means of conveying subject-matter as well as arousing interest in the meetings, and keeping women informed on matters of seasonal interest. Nine such letters were sent to a mailing list of

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DISTRIBUTION: One copy of this pamphlet has been sent to each extension worker in the Central States and to each extension director and county agent leader in the other States.





1,075 home makers. These letters have increased attendance; stimulated and maintained interest; and reached some home makers who had never attended our meetings."

Every county agent can increase his proficiency in the art of persuasion through circular letters and press articles. The aim in this circular is to offer to county extension agents, specialists, and supervisors a few helpful suggestions based upon a study of extension circular letters and those used by business men.

#### Have a Definite Purpose in Mind

The first essential in writing a circular letter, as in the use of all other extension means, is to have in mind a definite purpose. In order to have the circular letters reach only those who will be most interested it is essential that the county extension agents prepare and use mailing lists classified by projects as well as by communities. There must be a clear understanding of the problem and point of view of the persons who are to receive the letter, the message, or information to be presented and the objective desired by the writer, whether it be action, good will, or a change of attitude. The letter must be read, understood, believed, remembered, and acted upon.

Circular letters sent out to announce meetings should not be mere announcements. They should contain material that will make people want to come. When a circular letter is sent to a selected group of people inviting them to attend a special meeting, the letter is effective if practically all receiving the letter attend and the others phone the office or take the trouble to explain later why they could not attend. If the purpose is to get a few selected farmers to become alfalfa demonstrators or cooperators, the effective letter obtains the cooperation of nearly all who are solicited. If there is little or no response it is a poor appeal.

Greater care is desirable in preparing a form letter than in preparing a letter to an individual because the circular letter must appeal to many people. In order to produce better circular letters, some extension agents make an outline of the letter before attempting to write or dictate it in final form. The essential steps in the circular letter are:

- (1) An appropriate salutation.
- (2) An interesting approach.
- (3) A first paragraph that will gain attention.
- (4) Material that will --
  - (a) Hold interest.
  - (b) Create realization of the seriousness of the problem.





- (c) Arouse a desire for remedy.
  - (d) Make a favorable impression.
  - (e) Cause a decision to act.
- (5) A closing statement that will encourage prompt action.

Among the other essentials are attractiveness, clearness, accuracy, brevity, and an interesting style of writing. In order to be most effective circular letters should carry only one main idea. Such letters are more easily read and understood and are more likely to get results.

#### Use Appropriate Salutation

Salutations must be appropriate and friendly. On this account it is particularly undesirable to use such formal salutations as "Sir," "Dear Sir," or "Dear Madam" in writing to farm people who are cooperating with the agent. "Dear Mr. Farmer" is somewhat objectionable because it is too much like a "broadcast" and not personal enough. If the number of circular letters to be sent is small it is usually considered worth while to type in the name of the person and use some such salutation as "Dear Mrs. Brown." In a letter relating to the dairy project the salutation "To Progressive Dairymen" used with discretion makes the recipients realize that the letter has gone out to a selected list. They take pride in being included in this group.

Among the other forms used are "Dear Mr. Poultryman," "Dear Cooperator," "Dear Club Member," and "To 4-H Club Members."

Because of the difficulty of finding suitable salutations, the salutation is often omitted and a caption or heading substituted, such as is used for news articles and many business letters. A good heading for a letter advocating sweet-clover pastures is the slogan, "Sweet clover doubles pasture carrying capacity." Among other good captions used are the following: "When to cut alfalfa," "How to double poultry profits," "See how easy it is," "Health habits for children." Some agents have used a stenciled reproduction of an ear of corn at the top of the page and sprouted kernels at the side, with caption "Will it grow?" A Wisconsin agent used the heading, "Test and weigh, to make cows pay."

#### Interest the Farmer in the Opening Sentences

Most farmers are now receiving so much mail that they do not read all of it. Just as the first impression of a person is likely to be the lasting one, so the first paragraph in a circular letter frequently determines whether the letter will be read or not.

Experienced county agents have learned that it is worth while to give careful thought to making the first few sentences unusual enough





to attract favorable attention and interesting enough to make one want to read the entire letter. Many of the suggestions for writing a good news article apply to methods of preparing a good circular letter. The "big idea" should usually be given or suggested at the beginning of the letter. An Iowa letter with heading, "Will it grow?" emphasizing the importance of testing seed corn, had three large kernels of corn at the top of the letter drawn to look like people with appropriately expressive faces. Kernel No. 1, said, "I don't know - I got mighty cold in October." No. 2 said, "I think I'll grow - they tested me with a jack-knife." No. 3 said, "I know I'll grow because the rag doll said so!"

The "shock" approach may be used by beginning with a sentence which at first seems an exaggeration, but on second thought is considered true, such as, "The best cow in the average herd makes as much money for the owner as the five poorest cows in the herd." A Kansas agent began his letter announcing seed-corn meetings with the statement, "Would you be surprised to learn that there is a difference of 40 bushels per acre between different varieties of corn grown on the same land under the same conditions?" One agent began with the expression, "Which are you most interested in - dollars or dimes?" A Nebraska series used the following interesting introductory paragraph:

"Do dollars and bushels mean anything to you? A man in one of our eastern counties farmed a place for several years and the highest yield of corn received during that period was 36 bushels per acre. He seeded it down to red clover for two years. The next year he husked an average of 65 bushels, the following year 57 bushels, and the last year 45 bushels per acre. In other words, two years of clover and three years of corn produced nearly as much corn as five years had before, and he was two crops of clover to the good. What's the use of spending five years of labor if you can do the same thing in three?"

Often it is desirable to begin with a compliment for the group addressed for being open-minded and progressive. In order to have variety in circular letters, some agents have used a hectograph to duplicate letters written in long hand. Others have prepared such letters on mimeoscope before mimeographing. Excellent suggestions regarding the approach and "set-up" of circular letters can be had by studying the advertisements in magazines and the hundred or more circular letters which you receive each year from aggressive business firms.

#### Cartoons and Cuts Add Force and Appeal

Many agents are using appropriate cartoons and pictures in circular letters to reenforce the statements in the letter. One letter regarding poultry had at the top a cartoon of "Uncle Sam" with a pencil, looking at a record in his hand and a basket of eggs by his side while he said, "Last year eggs brought me a billion and a quarter dollars." A good, well-selected half tone, well labeled, is often more effective





than the reading matter which would occupy the same amount of space. Some use cuts made from local photographs. County agents need to be on their guard against using so many cartoons that they lose their effectiveness.

Many agents, in announcing a series of meetings, show a calendar page of the month with the dates of meetings encircled.

A Kansas agent showed cartoons of a man looking through a telescope at some small insects labeled, "Chinch bugs as they appeared to most farmers last fall and winter." A large chinch bug, which was frightening the farmer, was labeled, "Chinch bug as it now appears."

Contrast in cartoons and photographs is effective for showing the "before and after taking." Two people are often shown, one face registering the satisfaction enjoyed from following the recommended practice and the other registering disappointment or dissatisfaction because he did not.

A Rhode Island agent used a sketch of Santa Claus with a pack of presents labeled, "home-grown protein," "alfalfa," and the like. The letter opened with the question, "Are you waiting for Santa Claus to bring the things you want?"

One letter announcing a livestock feeders' day showed a boy in swimming and calling to his pals, "Come on in, the water is fine."

An Illinois county agent in a circular letter to announce a tour, used a cartoon of a man carrying a large placard sign with information about the tour and closed with "Step on the gas and come." Some agents have used a drawing of a hand showing a card tied to one finger with a string. On the card was some such statement as, "Don't forget the big hitch demonstration at the Brown farm, 2 p.m. Tuesday the tenth." Others have begun the letter with the statement, "We all need to be reminded once in a while." A Kansas agricultural agent began his circular letter, announcing an orchard pruning demonstration, with the heading, "They know." He used a sketch showing two birds in the sunny South discussing where to go for the summer. The sketch showed one bird saying, "What do you say we nest in a neglected orchard this year when we go north." The other bird replied, "Let's go to John Dont's. He never sprays or prunes. That's the place to find insects." Cartoons were of so much interest to the Iowa extension agents that the State office furnished them a booklet with reproductions of the best cartoons used by extension agents in the State. Nebraska and other States have issued similar material.





# THE FELLOW WHO GETS ACROSS



Cartoon showing essential steps or practices in a farming enterprise, taken from a circular letter prepared by W. O'Connell, county agent of Marshall County, Kans.





## The "You" and "Your Problem" Approach is Best

Every authority on effective business letters knows that we must use the "you" approach and attempt to show how what is presented will benefit the person receiving the message, rather than to use the "I" and "we" approach by indicating first what we have to "unload" or give information about. We must not only think of the point of view of the persons who are to receive the letters, but we must "get in step" with their point of view by saying in the beginning of the letter some things with which they will readily agree such as, "We do not soon forget what we learn by bitter experience." A Wisconsin agent started his alfalfa letter with the statement, "If you have properly prepared for it, alfalfa is not a difficult crop to grow." An Iowa letter began with the statement, "Remember it isn't the house, but where the house is located that governs the results you will have in raising young pigs." Some extension agents have used the "I know what you are up against" approach by stating facts or by using a word picture showing that they are thoroughly familiar with the problem to be met.

In writing to certain groups or kinds of farmers, one needs to consider their living, working, and reading habits. One needs to know that meetings in a dairy community should not be continued after 4 p.m. or held late at night. There are certain improvements such as undertaking expensive drainage or building projects, which farmers will not make readily in a period of farm depression unless special reasons can be given for doing so.

### Make the Farmer Aware of his Problem and Anxious for a Remedy

People who are satisfied with their present results or conditions because they are not aware of the importance or seriousness of problems or losses, are not interested in the remedies which the extension agents have to suggest. It is, therefore, desirable to use striking facts which will help people to become fully conscious of the needs or difficulties which they are facing. We must help them to realize their wants and to anticipate the satisfaction which the suggested remedy can bring.

A letter prepared by an Iowa county agent began as follows: "How would you feel if you went out to your own hog lot some morning to meet a scene like this? Nearly a million head of hogs went that way last year from cholera, the most common contagious disease of swine in this country. The infection is widespread and if you have a good drove of pigs coming on now you should protect your time, labor, feed, and other investments in these hogs by immunizing them against hog cholera before it is too late."

A Wisconsin letter with the heading, "One cow better than a poor herd," had a good cow at the left with the statement, "This cow gave 345 pounds of butterfat last year and returned \$109 above feed



cost." At the right was a picture of 10 cows and the statement: "Ten other cows in cow-culling club work in Ashland County last year gave an average of only 101 pounds of butterfat and returned their owners \$10.42 each above feed cost." Attention can be called to an important situation by quoting statistics such as: "Twelve dairy feeding demonstrations in this county show that the cost of feeding dairy cows can be materially reduced. In three of these herds the cost has been reduced 12 cents per cow per day by using the following rations." Interest can be increased by an explanation of what changes in feeding were made and why each feed was used in the mixture. One Virginia agent in suggesting preservation of eggs began with the statement, "Last year April eggs were 25 cents, while November eggs were 50 cents per dozen." The aim in this part of the letter is to show that the agent is dealing with a practical problem of great importance. A statement of the average loss per farm in the county is usually more effective than the total loss in the State or country.

#### Appeal to the Farmer's Wants

Wishing to do a thing is of little consequence unless it culminates in action. In order to intensify the desire of the persons receiving the circular letter to act upon suggestions given and to remedy the situation, one should appeal to a fundamental want or motive such as the desire for increased gain or profit, health, safety, saving of time, durability, and the high regard of other people. Men are inclined to be most interested in increased financial returns and utility, while women are more interested in health and welfare of children and in appearance and serviceability. Boys and girls like an enthusiastic, friendly letter with boy and girl language, not over their heads, laying emphasis upon the fun, satisfaction, and pride of ownership or achievement they can have for the effort put forth to win or to do something worth while.

In laying further basis for interesting the readers and making them want the remedy, one can either focus attention on the annoyances or losses they now have from this plant disease or other problem, or emphasize the satisfaction they may expect from the proposed remedy such as the saving, increased profits, or better health.

Persuasive writing is like effective speaking in a debate or like trying to convince a jury. In writing, however, one can only try to imagine the effect on the readers. In writing circular letters, as in speaking, it is helpful to pick out certain individuals representing the group and write as if one were writing a personal letter to one of those individuals. This method is also used by leading editors and advertisers. All good writers, advertisers, and speakers strive to have a pleasing beginning, a convincing use of examples, illustrations, reasons, and suggestions for cumulative effect, and a persuasive ending.





A Connecticut letter contained the following statement designed to appeal to the farmer's desire to prevent financial loss:

"A loss of 25 per cent was shown in a survey of 200,000 chicks brooded in 1925. If we place a conservative value of 25 cents each on the chicks that die and say nothing about the feed and care up to that time, the total annual loss on 4,000,000 chicks brooded in Connecticut was \$250,000."

One Nebraska letter, emphasizing the importance of soil-saving dams, had a photograph of a deep gully at the top. The letter began with, "How much would a ditch like the one shown above detract from the value of one of your 40-acre fields? The man who owns this one says \$3,000. Perhaps this is a little high, but when the time lost in farming around it is considered and the inconvenience and breakage of machinery in attempting to cross it is added, he is not far wrong. Besides, who wants to buy a farm with the Panama Canal running through it."

Another Nebraska letter, in referring to a photograph of two adjoining fields in the county, used the following statements. "The field on the left belongs to one farm and the field on the right to another. Thirteen years ago these two farms were of equal fertility, but today one acre of one farm will yield as much as two of the other. 'Why should one plow, plant, cultivate, husk and fret over the corn on 50 acres when one can raise just as much on 25 with about one-half the labor and besides have that other 25 acres in clover or alfalfa,' asked the fellow on the good farm. I had to admit I didn't know why he should and I haven't found anyone who does know. But still the majority of farmers do that very thing."

Such procedure in letter writing is usually referred to as creating a realization of want or need.

#### When to Use Reasons and When Suggestion

The material may be presented in the form of tactfully worded suggestions, carefully phrased reasons, or arguments. Both methods may be used in the same letter. Many farm people are conservative and cautious in adopting new practices. People are most readily convinced by reasons furnished through facts, demonstrations, samples, and testimonials. The experience of relatives and friends usually carries most conviction. This fact accounts for the frequent use of local testimonials, which help to create confidence, especially when from unbiased sources. Convincing local result demonstrations are helpful in building confidence in the county agent as well as in the farm practice demonstrated. Such evidence must be chosen thoughtfully and presented conservatively. Endorsements of a practice by prominent farm people can be best obtained by asking specific questions and then getting permission to quote. Even a list of those who follow the practice





serves a similar purpose in building confidence. Some county agents, in writing to farmers about their project work, use the expression, "This is the most important problem now confronting the farmers of this county." Although it is nearly always desirable to take a cheerful, optimistic attitude, an exaggeration of facts is undesirable because it tends to break down confidence in the writer. Circular letters, like advertising, must be truthful and not tricky.

Suggestions can be used most effectively with reference to older well-established projects or practices in which confidence has been built through result demonstrations and other means. Actual facts and arguments are more necessary when the subject relates to a new practice in which confidence has not been built up.

In salesmanship it is usually recognized that suggestions are acted upon more rapidly than are arguments, but products sold through "reasons why" are most likely to "stay sold." The importance of "growing legumes for the land's sake" is readily accepted from a mere suggestion, but it usually takes a "reason why" to bring out the desirability of one legume as compared with another or a new variety of corn as compared with an old, established variety.

The importance of using suggestions is brought out in Arthur Brisbane's remark that effective writing consists of saying 100 words and making the reader think 1,000. A letter regarding hog-lot sanitation closed with, "Are you going to give your pigs a chance to make you more money this year?" A limestone letter ended with the following paragraph: "Properly handled ground limestone will return a dollar of profit for every dime spent for limestone, but every year you delay using the limestone means that you are a year older and have lost a year's return on a profitable investment. Do it now." A poultry letter made excellent use of suggestion by closing with this advice: "Feed the following laying mash for one month, then cull and note the results." A statement of the recommended mixture followed. A Virginia letter contains the caption, "Farm accounting lights the way," which is a form of suggestion. Instead of devoting much space to the description of a product such as alfalfa hay it is desirable to lay emphasis on what the product is for and what it will do for the livestock fed and the feeder.



THAT ROPE HAS PUT HIM  
ACROSS MORE THAN ONCE



This cartoon taken from a Kansas letter was effective in influencing the local farming people through suggestion.





### Close with Suggestion for Action

Failure by farm people to adopt the practice recommended in a circular letter is usually due to one of the following reasons. The evidence or suggestion in favor of the recommended practice was not sufficiently convincing or impelling; the procedure seemed too complicated and as if it would be more trouble to do it or to get the necessary material than the results would justify; or it would be too expensive. The letter should, therefore, close with a convincing argument supported by facts to show ease of adoption and low cost and finally a suggestion for immediate action. A Colorado letter closed with the slogan, "Build your soil over; plow under sweet clover." In advertising and sales letters such efforts to get people to act are called "intensifying the want" or "motivation." Others prefer to close with a summary of the reasons why and a "clincher" statement. Encourage the farm people to take a first step such as telephoning for more information, filling out a return card asking for a bulletin, or attending a meeting on the subject. Frequently a good farmer who is unwilling to carry on a demonstration to help himself will do so in order to encourage his less progressive neighbors to adopt the improved method. But the appeal, "I need your help to convert others," is not strong.

Many business firms make the "We'll let you in on this" appeal. This can be done in extension work by indicating that only a limited number of demonstrations can be carried on in cooperation with the State livestock specialist this year and only the demonstrators will be given the record books or will have the culling by specialist done on their farms. Only those who reply during the next 10 days will have their results quoted in the news article now being prepared.

The suggestion that several progressive farmers have agreed to cooperate or giving names of progressive farmers now following the practice will sometimes work well as a part of the final appeal.

In closing with a definite suggestion for action, it is often desirable to supply a stimulus for immediate action by showing the importance of obtaining relief from present losses or annoyances without delay. For emphasis some agents use a postscript for the final suggestion. To call special attention to the postscript type it with red ink. Every method can be overdone, and it is desirable to use a variety of good methods. The influence of effective closing sentences is usually weakened by a hackneyed participial "trusting" or "hoping" phrase before the complimentary close.

Various phrases are used for the complimentary close, including the ordinary stereotyped phrases and the more unusual ones such as "yours for greater profits" and "yours for better crops." Many omit this rather useless phrase in circular letters.





### Clearness and Conciseness are Essential

A good test of a circular letter is to have some one else read it and criticise it for clearness. Does it convey the meaning intended? To be clear to the readers the writer should avoid technical terms and meaningless or hackneyed expressions. Most graphs and charts are too complex for use in circular letters to farm people who are not accustomed to using them. Details should be given only when needed.

Some authorities on letter writing have brought out the fact that no letter is too long if every paragraph, sentence, and phrase is essential in advancing the main idea. It is usually not necessary to use more than one page. It is as necessary to prune out unessential words which prevent clearness and effectiveness as it is to prune out dead and interfering branches in a fruit tree, for best results. The primary aim of the letter should be furthered, not hindered, by its form and length.

The most important practices recommended may be summarized near the close of the letter.

If additional material is to be presented, extension agents might follow the example of business firms and inclose a brief circular or leaflet, which will be read by those whose interest has been aroused by the letter. If the aim is to get farmers to want to sow sweet clover for pasture, it is a waste of time and paper to devote much space in the letter to telling how to sow sweet clover. This subject may be covered in an inclosed leaflet or handled in a follow-up letter to those who indicate that they wish to grow sweet-clover pasture. An inclosure on poultry feeding might well go with a circular letter on culling or housing.

Short sentences, short paragraphs, and wide margins help to make a letter more easily read and understood. If three or four special points are to be emphasized, it is sometimes desirable to number them or to use indented paragraphs. Side headings are also effective. An important phrase may be set in capitals, typed in with red ink, or underscored for emphasis. Such methods, for emphasis, must be used sparingly.

Directions for a procedure such as mixing spray materials should be given specifically enough to be followed easily but concisely enough to make the busy farmer take the time to read it. In a drawing used to show a piece of equipment or some special feature of a building, the important parts should be marked with arrows, encircled numbers, or other special devices, as is done by many firms in advertising machinery and equipment.



Authorities on the subject of business correspondence suggest the dictionary habit in order that we may all be more careful in our choice of words and consider shades of meaning as they are commonly understood by the people to whom we are writing. A careful selection of appropriate, forceful, and descriptive or "picture" words helps to make language striking and effective. Omit unnecessary words at the beginning and end of a letter, such as "I beg to state" or "I beg to inform."

#### Hints on Improving the Appearance of Circular Letters

Circular letters may be made more attractive in appearance by the use of a better quality of paper, good ink, clean type, more carefully prepared stencils, and greater care in distributing ink and in duplicating. On hard-finish paper it is necessary to lay in blotters or sheets of paper between copies as run. Legibility is a primary requisite, and smudging or offsetting should be avoided. Appearance can often be improved by the use of colored or tinted paper. Some prefer to use printed letterheads. These improvements cost little, but they add much to the pleasure of reading and increase considerably the amount of material that people will read.

Cartoons and drawings can be traced most easily on dry-process stencils. Farm papers, magazines, bulletins, daily newspapers, and other press material furnish ideas, sketches, or cartoons which can be produced on stencil through the use of various kinds of styli and screen. Manufacturers of duplicating machines furnish reliable directions for such work. Vertical and horizontal lines or cross-section paper are helpful for making uniform curves and letters of the same size.

Some agents have prepared simple, inexpensive mimeoscopes costing only \$2 or \$3 for material. These are made in the form of a box about 10 inches wide, 18 inches long, and 12 inches deep. A curved piece of tin is set in the bottom as a reflector. An electric light is placed in the box over reflector and under a piece of double-strength ground glass fitted into the top of the box so as to leave the top edges of box exposed for fastening the stencil with thumb tacks. Holes are bored in the side of the box to prevent the glass from becoming too hot.

#### How to Double the Number of Replies

Some agents have reported more than 50 per cent of replies to circular letters even when several hundred were sent out. If a reply is expected, make it easy to reply by inclosing a self-addressed card or envelope and by sending an outline or questions which can be easily filled out by using check mark, "yes" or "no," or figures in reply. Simplify questions, and reduce the number of questions to the minimum. If there are too many questions the person asked will not "do it now," but too frequently he will put it off indefinitely. If only a few





replies are involved and they are relatively important, inclose a stamped or penalty envelope. Promise something for a prompt reply, such as a bulletin, special mention in news articles, or a special copy of a summary of this somewhat confidential information gathered through the questionnaire.

Many farm families do not have what they consider appropriate stationery on hand, or do not know where to find it conveniently, or they do not feel like taking the trouble to write a formal reply. They will, however, be willing to fill out a card or an inclosed form which may be at the bottom or on the back of the letter sent them. Suggest that they use a pencil and reply on the back of your letter. Many agents have used the idea of asking for "10 seconds for writing 'yes' or 'no' on this card." Some agents, in sending out a card on which farmers were asked to indicate their questions regarding their alfalfa problems, closed their letters with the statement, "DON'T USE A STAMP - it doesn't need it. Just check your questions, sign your name, and drop in box." In some cases the number of replies from farmers can be doubled by such methods. One Wisconsin agent used two circular letters to follow up a series of poultry meetings to determine the practices adopted as a result of the meetings. Letters with return cards were sent to 591 families represented at the meetings; 307 cards were returned; 288 of these reported an average of more than two practices adopted per farm as a result of the meetings. Another Wisconsin agent used postal cards signed by local project leaders to announce a series of 10 dairy meetings in the county with two and three meetings per day. The 400 cards sent out were primarily responsible for bringing out an average attendance of 24 dairymen per meeting. In recommending the speaker the agent used the following statement on the card: "This man knows cows as if he had been through them with a lantern."

A 4-H club supervisor reported that in placing a form at the bottom of a letter to county agents, asking that they use it for reply instead of replying with formal letter, he not only received a larger percentage of replies, but the agents replied more promptly because they found it convenient to reply without the help of a stenographer. Encourage people to take the first step by letting you know whether, for example, they are more interested in legumes for pasture or for hay. It is important that action be taken as soon after the letter has been read as possible, while reason is most convinced and the desire is most intense. One agent closed his letter with a sentence reading, "You'll thank me later for urging you to do it now."

Time spent in revising circular letters to improve them pays well. The relative effectiveness of two different circular letters relating to the same subject can easily be tested by numbering the names of people on the special mailing list arranged alphabetically and sending one kind to those having even numbers and the other kind to those having odd numbers.





Some agents complain that farm people are less inclined to open letters sent out in penalty envelopes. This is not a reflection on the envelope, but on the kind of material which some extension agents have sent out in them.

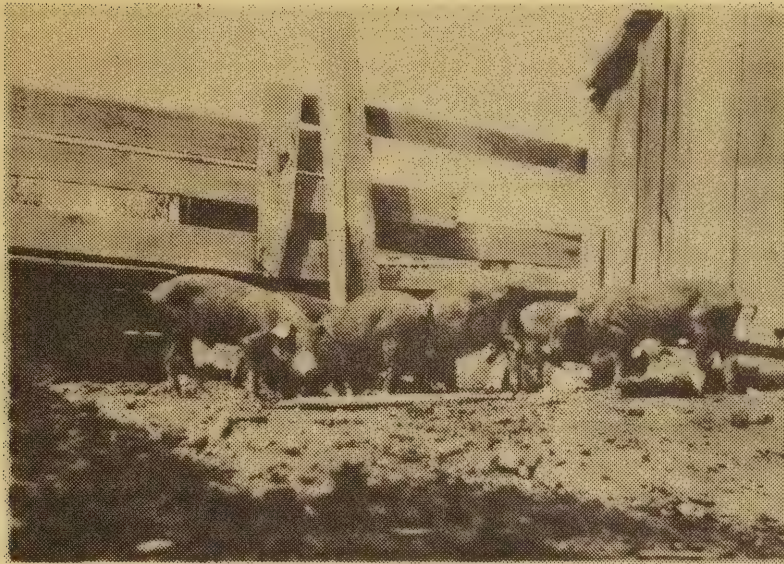
Circular letters must be well timed or seasonable. Farmers have little interest in information or material such as improved seed or spray formulas which they will not need for six months, unless some good reason is given for immediate action. Circular letters should not be sent to farmers during an exceptionally busy period such as harvest time unless the material presented must reach them at that time.

Several States have used series of printed circular letters relating to a single project. In Iowa 51 counties used an average of 800 sets per county of a series of four circular letters relating to a hog-lot sanitation. These letters were made up at the college for the county agent's signature and sold to county agents at cost.

They were sent out in penalty envelopes a week apart. Each succeeding letter of the series made brief reference to the preceding one. The following is an analysis of the first letter in the series.



## Sample of an Effective Circular Letter



Appropriate

Salutation.....Dear Mr. Brown:

Interesting "you  
and your problem"  
approach.

Did you ever raise pigs that looked like these? They were well fed, had more than their share of tonics, worm medicines, and "dope," but they did not have a real chance.

Picture words  
used in effec-  
tive description...

Their first mouthfuls of milk were mixed with worm eggs, and filth germs from the mud on the sow's udder. Every day they spent in the infected hog houses and yards they took on a fresh supply of infection. Some died and a few

Creates realiza-  
tion of serious  
situation.....

pulled through. They reached the market two to five months later than they should and lost money when they got there.

Emphasis on losses  
from insanitary  
hog lots.....

Healthy hogs have made their owners money the last two or three years. They will make money this year. Hogs like those in the picture never made a nickel for anybody. Those that finally "made the grade" took too much time, too much feed, and had to pay for too many "dead ones" that dropped off on the way to leave anything for profit.

Dollars and  
cents appeal.....





Prevention lies in the way the pigs are managed. Medicine seldom cures or prevents these troubles. Clean pigs raised on

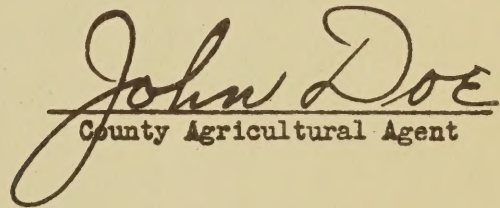
Suggestion.....clean land grow into money.

Desire for remedy created by emphasis on satisfaction to be gained from remedy proposed.....

Result demonstration facts used to build confidence.....

Otto Schoubee of Shelby County raised 83 thrifty pigs on clean ground from 11 sows. At 6½ months these pigs averaged 240 pounds and brought \$2,475. The same year he had 16 sows which farrowed in the old contaminated hog houses. These sows saved 60 pigs which weighed 90 pounds each at 5½ months and when sold brought only \$1,013.

These results have been duplicated in Action suggested.....practically every Iowa county. Are you going to give your pigs a chance to make you more money this year? Next week you will receive further information regarding this matter.

  
County Agricultural Agent

Investigation line in the way of the  
the national, national action group  
with these findings. These are listed in  
the following table.

These results have been reported to the following table.	These results have been reported to the following table.
to give you a chance to see the these are your own results.	to give you a chance to see the these are your own results.
Further information regarding this matter.	Further information regarding this matter.

*[Handwritten signature]*  
John Doe







